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NEW-YORK WEEKLY TRIBUNE. A NEW-YORK PAPER FOR THE COUNTRY. PUBLISHED EVERY SATURDAY MORNING. AT THE LOW PRICE OF TWO DOLLARS PER ANNUM, IN ADVANCE.

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Foreign Correspondence of The New-York Tribune.

THE IMPERIAL GALLERY OF FLORENCE.

The Florentines are justly proud of their great Galleries devoted to the Fine Arts, and opened to all strangers with the most unreserved liberality. Their collections of paintings surpass even those of Rome, and every nobleman's palace (the Pitti, in which the Grand Duke resides, being very properly at their head), contains a suite of rooms, filled with the genuine pictures of the best old masters. The most extensive Gallery is however that contained in the "Uffizi," and dignified with the title of "Imperial and Royal." Turning out of the Piazza del Gran Duca, and ascending a broad and lofty staircase, you pass through two vestibules into a noble Gallery lined with paintings and sculpture; but at your first visit you will hastily pass by everything else to reach the "Tribuna," the shrine of the masterpieces of art. Half way down the gallery, a door on the left is inscribed with this title. You enter it with beating heart and throbbing pulse as you would the presence chamber of a Queen—and it is indeed even more—

for here "the Goddess loves to dwell and fills the air around with beauty." You stand before the "Venus de' Medici," who seems bending forward to greet you with a smile, and whom you are bound to fall down before and worship, unless you have the independence not to admire by prescription or because so many poets and sages have set you the example, and have still farther the misfortune like myself to be sadly disappointed in the charms of the divinity. Beautiful she certainly is, so far as graceful curves, rounded swells, and harmonious outlines can make her so, but every token of soul is wanting. Were Pygmalion's miracle repeated, and life given to her, she must needs be an idiot with her little head, far too small for her body. Some artists too more unprincipled than her fellows, dare to insinuate that even her mere bodily perfection is greatly exaggerated, since she is now in thirteen separate pieces, put together by some skillful restorer (as Ladies are "made up" by dress-makers), and they hint that in the process she has acquired some pieces which belong to other statues. A distinguished sculptor from our own country thinks her far inferior to the "Venus Genetrix" in another hall of the same Gallery. This is all rank heresy, it is true, but if a man does not dare to think for himself and to avow his opinions, however anti-orthodox they may be, he might much better travel by his own fireside with the eyes and mind of such trust-worthy voyagers as Madame Starke.

The "Tribuna" is a sumptuous octagonal cabinet, with floor of rich marble, paneled walls, carved and gilt, and cupola incrustated with mother-of-pearl, with a splendor worthy of the masterpieces of statuary and painting which it enshrines. On one side of the Venus is the group of the "Wrestlers," with every muscle strained to its utmost and with limbs entwined in wondrous complication. For spirited reality and success over mechanical difficulties it is unsurpassed by even the "Laocoon." On the other side is the puzzling "Arctonno," a man stooping on one knee to sharpen a knife, and at the same time looking eagerly upwards. A dozen theories have been started to explain the meaning of this statue, but all are merely conjectural, and therefore to be believed only in proportion to their plausibility. The one at present most in vogue calls it the slave who is recorded as having discovered in such a position the conspiracy of the sons of Brutus. Others would raise it to the dignity of representing Cincinnatus; and others again would degrade it to the Scythian slave employed to flay Marsyas, as he is sculptured in precisely such an attitude on a sarcophagus in the Roman church of "St. Paul without the walls." Lord Byron is among these latter critics, but who shall decide where so many doctors disagree? Two other statues—Apollo and a dancing Faun—complete the Quintette, and some two dozen choice pictures cover the walls, one-fourth of their number by the "divine Raphael." Most of them will disappoint the visitor, who expects that the beauties of a great painting will strike him vividly and suddenly, like a flash of lightning. The only pictures which at all approach to this effect are Rubens' Crucifixion at Antwerp, Correggio's Saint Jerome at Parma, and Titian's Magdalen at Venice. All the rest require frequent and deep study before a title of their excellencies appear. We need a special education to be enabled to appreciate, or even to understand their merits. This becomes self-evident when we call to mind that painting is only a peculiar mode of expressing certain ideas, and is therefore a veritable language, which we must learn letter by letter before we can attain a comprehension of its whole import. As well might we expect that a foreigner, who had learnt just enough English to order his dinner, should be able to comprehend the delicate shades of beauty in Paradise Lost, as hope, that when we have made some such progress in the alphabet of the Fine Arts, we shall find ourselves capable of appreciating their masterpieces.

Quitting the Tribune for the present, let us reënter the grand gallery. It occupies the upper floor of the Palace of the Uffizi, and runs down one side of the street, crosses it by a covered gallery like the Venetian Bridge of Sighs which is here, in harmony with the difference in the Governments, changed into a Bridge of Pleasure and runs up the other side, like the letter H with its cross-line transferred to its top. All this is merely the grand corridor, from which branch off various other saloons like the Tribune, but in itself it is a great gallery. Its floor is of marble; its ceiling is richly painted with subjects from the history of Florence, and a frieze of portraits runs along the top of the walls, which are further covered with paintings chiefly of the early Tuscan school. Between these are ranged statues, busts, sarcophagi and basso-reliefs, while larger groups meet you at intervals in the middle of the corridor. Among them are the like of a shepherd taking the thorn from his foot, the dra. Urania, Michael Angelo's mock-anqu "Lechus and Faun," and Bandinelli's "The copy of the Laocoon which he modestly pre-

ferred to the original. A very complete series of busts of the Roman Emperors from Cæsar to Constantine is ranged along the walls, and it is very curious to compare their authentic features with their well-known characters, and to notice how completely they overthrew the ordinary rules of physiognomy. The cruel Nero appears as a mild child with a sweet smile and a noble forehead; the virtuous and intellectual Vespafrican looks like a stupid volutary; and the infamous Caligula has a face of harmless honesty. Returning to the shrine of the Venus, we will glance at some of the pictures. Raphael's portrait of the "Fornarina" is one of the most beautiful, and is exquisitely beautiful, though its round fullness and rich warmth of tone are so unlike his usual pure simplicity, that many critics doubt its authenticity, and attribute it to Giorgione the Venetian, who has left one very like it in the gallery of the Duc of Modena, and who died of love at the age of thirty three, four years younger than Raphael himself. When we find connoisseurs upon the very spot thus differing upon the genuineness of a strongly characterized painting attributed to the very Prince of Painters, we may judge how absurd is the positive certainty with which amateurs even in America often pronounce upon the painter of a picture which a blackened canvas. It now seems admitted that the history of a picture and the possibility of tracing it from the original possessor to its latest owner is the only sure test, and is far beyond the best marked signature or execution. But on the other hand every painter of originality has a style of his own, as strongly marked as that of an author, and you soon learn to name their works in a gallery as readily as you would recognize a new poem by a favorite poet. Raphael can no more be mistaken for Titian than Byron for Burns, nor Michael Angelo for Carlo Dolce than Milton for Moore. Others may however imitate their mere style without approaching their genius, and they themselves may from when occasionally adopt a different manner, and hence arise the doubts which make the most finished connoisseurship sometimes uncertain.

Raphael's "St. John preaching in the desert" is also in the Tribune. Its authenticity has likewise been doubted, though perhaps without reason, as it has remained here since 1559. In spite of the spirit of the attitude and the perfection of the execution, there is a heavy animal expression in the face, which has been lately explained by the discovery that the painter's model was a handsome negro boy who had found his way to Italy. Near it hangs Titian's Venus, which American prudery (which I find quite proverbial among the English) would cover with a thick veil, as indeed it would had the gems of the gallery, though here they are interspersed with the most sacred subjects. Which nation is in the right, or does the truste taste like the two extremes?

The Tuscan pictures are chiefly contained in two rooms on the left of the Tribune. Among them are Bronzino's "Descent of Christ into Hades," (which rivals Michael Angelo's) his fascinating portrait of the famous Bianca Capello; Ghirlandajo's Saint Zanobio, and many more well worth examination; but most beautiful of all is the "Saint Cecilia," of Carlo Dolce. Most of the productions of this master are too elegantly sweet, as his surname imports, but this gem of beauty has his highest merits without any of his defects. A celestial light streams from a wound in the neck of the lovely martyr, but she looks earnestly upwards in eager rapture as if her faith conquered her agony. Its charm is of the highest order—that of expression—and is of that rare excellence, which increases and improves at each view in unceasing progression. It is rivaled only by the "Poey" of the same painter in the Corsini Palace. Carlo Dolce has a wife and five daughters, all beautiful—he always took them for his models, for he could have found none better—and being very religious, withal, he has repeated their faces again and again, under the names and with the attributes of all the saints in the calendar. Saint Cecilia is said to be a portrait of his youngest daughter, for tradition has remembered the original of each, though they lived two hundred years ago, so affectionate and personal is the attachment to the arts in this earthly Paradise; and when I exclaimed to the old *cicerone* (who showed me a dozen of these portraits, all resembling and yet all differently charming.) "What a beautiful family Carlo Dolce must have had!" he replied, as if they were his own intimate friends, "ah yes, signore; beautiful and good!"

The Flemish, German and Dutch pictures are on the right of the Tribune. The specimens of Rubens do him great injustice, and he can never be duly appreciated, except in his native Flanders. There is a delightful little landscape by *Ruyssdael*, very simply composed, with an old tree, which you almost see wave in the wind, and around which a road winds toward the distant mountains in the low horizon; but, simple as it is, "a man long pent in city walls" might accept it as a most welcome and refreshing substitute for the rural reality. In an adjoining room hangs a marine view by *Claude Lorraine*, with an infinite distance of atmosphere seeming to run miles back, into the picture, and with translucent waters which the golden light of the setting sun seems to shine not upon, but into and through, and to interpenetrate their very substance. Mr. G. L. Brown, one of the very best of our landscape painters, is now copying it most faithfully for a gentleman of New-York, and its arrival there will be a source of great enjoyment to all stay-at-home amateurs. The Venetian paintings occupy the two next rooms, and most admired among them is Titian's "Flora," so often copied and engraved; she is drawing her white drapery over her bosom with her left hand, and holding in her right the flowers which give the picture its name. All these painters and a hundred more, whom I have not space to name, seem to you like old friends. You learn to recognize their works at sight and become familiar with their various peculiarities of taste and feeling, from which you unconsciously form to yourself an opinion of their character. You then become anxious to see the faces of those who have given you so much pleasure, and to compare your imaginings with the reality. Your wishes have been anticipated by the liberality of the Princes who have collected this Gallery for your enjoyment, and they have here brought together five hundred portraits of artists, painted by themselves. The rooms which they occupy are among the most interesting of all, and I found myself revisiting them again and again to salute my old friends and

Life and Public Services of Henry Clay. Price 12 cents a single copy—10 copies for \$1.

The following is a table of the Contents of the Chapters in this work: Life and Public Services of Henry Clay. CHAPTER I. Birth and Parentage—His early life—Education—His studies—His early public life—His first political views—His first political views—His first political views.

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DRINKERS OF Sarsaparilla—The Jews' Extract of Sarsaparilla is the most excellent, a most powerful purgative, and a most valuable medicine for all the diseases of the bowels, and for all the diseases of the bowels, and for all the diseases of the bowels.

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